

The IBEW SPARQ

A quarterly newsletter highlighting IBEW values

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Safety at the IBEW's Core

Since the union's earliest days, one of the IBEW's top objectives has been "to promote reasonable methods of work." It's little wonder that our founders considered this a priority: In 1891, safety standards were scarce, and electrical workers were dying on the job at twice the rate of workers in other fields. Back then, when it came to safety, no one else was looking out for our safety.

Over the past 127 years, working people have made great progress, in part because unions like the IBEW have pushed for legal standards and best practices in workplace safety. We value safety so much here at the IBEW that we placed the word atop the five values of our union's Code of Excellence, ahead of *Professionalism*, *Accountability*, *Responsibility*, and *Quality*.

WORKING SAFE IS CRUCIAL

In 2016:

- » **5,190 workers died on the job in the U.S.** (*U.S. Department of Labor*)
- » **905 workers died on the job in Canada** (*Assoc. of Workers' Compensation Boards*)

Hard-won safety regulations, along with technological improvements, have improved safety standards at the local, state, provincial, and federal levels. But unfortunately, enforcement too often can fall victim to political pres-



ures. Over the past year in the U.S., for example, a rule requiring employers to keep accurate records of workplace injuries was rolled back, and the number of Occupational Safety and Health Administration inspectors was slashed nearly 10 percent in 2017.

In that kind of environment, it's critical that we continue to take the initiative to make sure all our IBEW sisters and brothers go home safely at the end of the day. And there are plenty of examples where IBEW locals are taking the lead to keep members safe.

With underground line work becoming increasingly common, Chicago Local 9 members collaborated with signatory contractor Aldridge Electric to design and build a mobile, state-of-the-art trailer to safely train workers across the country.

For years, laws in almost every U.S. and Canadian jurisdiction have re-

quired motorists to slow down and move at least one lane away from emergency personnel working on roadway incidents. Thanks in part to persistent lobbying by IBEW activists—most recently, by Seattle Local 77—more than 30 states now extend the same protection to linemen and other utility workers.

That's the IBEW difference. Our members and leaders know that working safely helps prevent deaths and serious injuries on the job; and, with or without regulations, we can never afford to let down our guard. While it can be tempting to take shortcuts and skip steps, IBEW members demonstrate the Code of Excellence by following safety procedures to the letter. It's what keeps us and our union sisters and brothers safe on the job. And there's nothing more important than that.



What does SPARQ mean to you? Have an idea for the newsletter? Email theSPARQ@ibew.org



Commitment to Safety Pays Off

IBEW members in the telecommunications branch are trained to work safely. But occasionally, members go above and beyond to ensure the safety of their sisters and brothers—and maybe avoid an unnecessary expense for their employers.

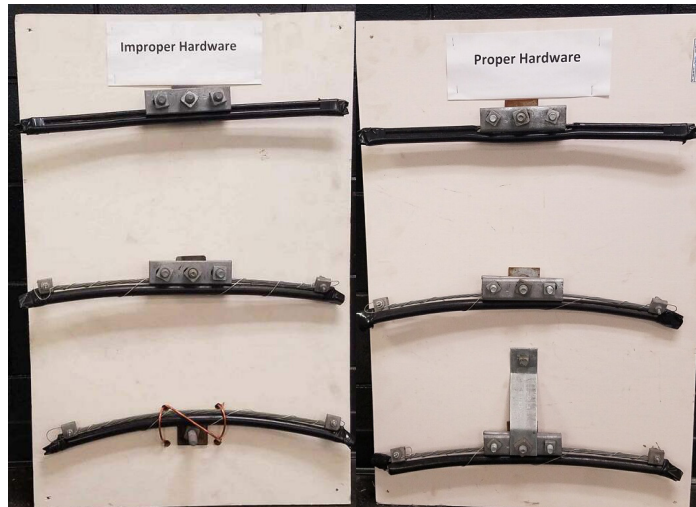
Tampa, Fla., Local 824 members at Frontier Communications did just that last year.

The local utility hired outside contractors to replace aging electrical poles around Tampa. After, Local 824 members would reinstall telecommunications equipment on the new poles.

But when the work started, they found a mess. Cables were hanging low or not attached at all. The contractors didn't install the appropriate hardware to allow Frontier employees to do their work, making for a hazardous work situation.

At Local 824's next Joint Safety Committee meeting, members Joseph Reibsome and Cameron Harrell proposed

a solution. Reibsome put together a display board showing the clamps and attachments installed improperly. Another display showed Local 824 members how to do it correctly.

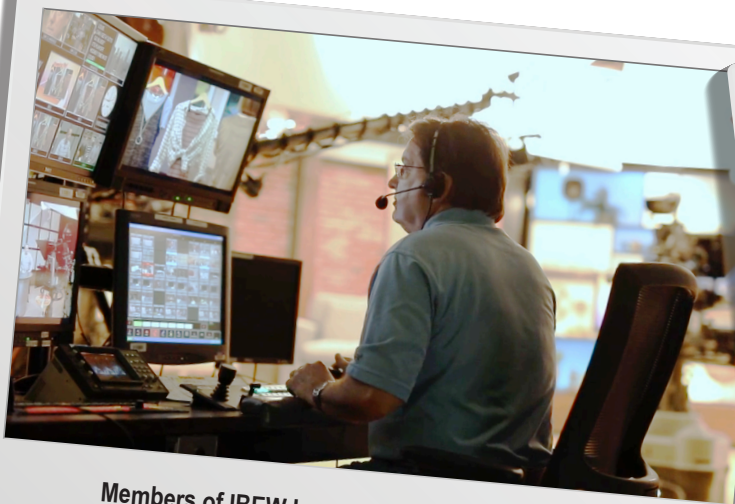


Harrell made sure a copy of each display was distributed throughout the local union's jurisdiction. Local 824 leadership also contacted the power company to ask it to use the proper hardware and gave it the part number for the clamps so they could be ordered and distributed to contractors still on the job.

In doing so, Local 824 avoided a potentially hazardous situation for its members and ensured it won't happen again. Reibsome and Harrell's awareness and initiative may even end up saving money for Frontier Communications, underlining the value of having well-trained, safety-conscious IBEW members on the job.

Their example is a lesson for every IBEW member. Paying attention to safety and seeking solutions by contacting a steward or business manager might just save a life.

SPARQ GOES LOCAL



Members of IBEW Local 4 in St. Louis believe the Code of Excellence is improving their jobs and local union.



IBEW Local 4 represents broadcasting professionals throughout the St. Louis region, including camera operators, news videographers and assignment editors.